

Indisputable
THE *Bibl. Appl.*
DIVINE AUTHORITY
OF THE
SCRIPTURES

Philosophically Prov'd:

OR, THE
Christian Philosopher:

BEING

AN ANSWER,
TO THE
Moral Philosopher.

To which is added,

THE
CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER.

To the whole is prefix'd,

A PREFACE,

CONTAINING

A Vindication of the Truth of Revelation, and an
Answer to some difficult Questions.

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THE
GIVEN AUTHORITY
OF THE
SCRIPTURES

OR THE



AN
TO THE
Moral Philosopher

QUESTIONS
A P. R. H. A. C. I.

A. J. H. A. C. I. of the British Museum, and an
to the British Museum

LONDON
Printed by J. B. A. C. I. of the British Museum, and an
to the British Museum



T H E

P R E F A C E.



VERY Man, who has any Concern for Religion and Virtue, ought to exert his Abilities in Vindication of them, and endeavour to turn the Current of those Inundations, which are poured upon us by the industrious Attempts of our Modern Deists to break down the Boundaries of Revelation, the chief Foundation of that Reason, which our present Moralists set up in Opposition to it.

FOR, supposing them deprived of the very Revelation, they deny the Authority of, how much their Reason would be superior to some Part of the Brutal Creation, is plain from those Nations, who do not enjoy it. And, were our Modern Moralists under the same Disadvantages with these Ignorant Nations, they would be equally confused and confined in the Use of their natural Reason; so that it is evident, that the Light of Revelation, in the Country they live in, has furnished them with that Art of Reasoning, which they now employ against that Revelation itself.

AND have not the strongest Forts been taken and overthrown by the Treachery of their own

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Garrison, when all the Forces of open Enemies were never able to prevail against them.

ALL the Attacks of the Pagan Armies, to overthrow the Powers of the Christian Revelation and Oeconomy, were not only fruitless, but even tended to the Establishment of it, causing Multitudes of Persecutors to become its Profelytes, and thereby the Number of the Faithful increased, and the Cause, they opposed, was confirmed; till Ease, and a plentiful Enjoyment of the greatest Spiritual Advantages, caused Men to grow lukewarm in Religion, when it became usual with the Governors of certain Churches to form certain Schemes, not only to suit with the Tempers and Dispositions of the Laity under their spiritual Jurisdiction, but also to serve their own private Views of Temporal Interest, till Religion was so mixed with Temporal Institutions, that its Lustre was eclipsed, and its native Beauty lost in sophisticated Ornaments.

HENCE some, who, being in themselves corruptly inclined, have seen through the designing Views of their Church-Governors, to serve themselves in their own irreligious Practices, have declaimed against Revealed Religion, and endeavoured to expose it, as only a Piece of Policy and Priestcraft; while others, observing the Injuries done by the united Forces of these Bosom-Enemies, have honestly endeavoured to defend it against the Attacks of both, and to close these Ulcers, which were more and greater, than all the Forces and Oppositions of all its Declared Enemies could ever be able to make.

AND

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AND shall any Man, that wishes well to Truth, see Revealed Religion thus traduced against the Endeavours of the best Pens employed to support it, and to vindicate the Justice of its Precepts, and the Reasonableness of its Divine Doctrines, which are not to be paralleled by all Human Art and Invention; I say, shall any honest Man see the glorious Revelation of God, setting forth his Good-will to Men, thus ridiculed, and not feel a generous Emulation, a warm Desire, of assisting so laudable a Design, and contributing to the Support of so just a Cause?

I AM very sensible, that many Pious and Learned Men, both from the Press and Pulpit, have been engaged against the Moralists of this Age; but the Writings of the Clergy have been, by their Opponents, frequently represented as the Effects of Priestcraft.

BUT it is a trifling Evasion to make, that their Office should lessen the Authority of their Reasons and Arguments; and, I hope, the Enemy can gain no Advantage from any Observation, that their Lives and Conversations contradict their Doctrines, since, where there happen any such amongst the Clergy, they are generally those, who have been corrupted with their own pernicious Principles, and will seldom engage themselves in Defence of Truth, except it be with a View to serve their private Interests, to preserve them from Censure of their Superiors.

AND even their Conduct must have, upon their honest Brethren, such an Effect, as would be produced in an Army by a certain Knowledge, that Part of those, who stand ranged under the
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same Banners, would only stand idle Spectators of the Battle, and readily take Part with the Conquerors.

NOT but some of the Laity have very usefully employed their Pens in Defence of the Truth of the Christian Revelation, I hope, not without some Success; but, though I could wish to have no Occasion to have entered the Lists myself, I am fully persuaded there is still Assistance wanting in so good a Cause; and therefore I am not willing to lie idle, hoping, that even my Interposition may remove some Obstructions, and put Things into a true Light.

*I HAVE, in the following Discourse, vindicated the Justice and Goodness of God in his Creation of Man, notwithstanding he foresaw he would fall from his first Purity; from his Foresight also of Adam's Shame and Humility after it, and his Purpose to redeem him: Of which Purpose it was necessary Adam should be acquainted, by a Promise of it after his Fall; and that Adam should also acquaint his Posterity with the Promise of that Divine Goodness and Mercy, which God had made known to him: But, as it was probable, in the relapsed State of Man, that many of Adam's Posterity might receive still, falser and more confused Accounts thereof, in succeeding Generations; so, where the Accounts of the Revelation of this Redemption became very imperfect, there was a Provision included in the Promise of a Redeemer, that he should become a Light to every Man that should come into the World, to guide and direct such of his Posterity into such a Sense of Good and Evil, that (as they had not
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the open and clear Declarations of his Will) their own Consciences should condemn or acquit them : For those, who know not the Will of God any further than from the Dictates of natural Reason, must know, that they have received their Existence from some unknown and superior Being, to whom they must necessarily be accountable for their Actions, and either in this Life, or the next, be rewarded or punished for them ; a Consideration which must influence them to direct their Actions so as, they had been taught to believe, would be most pleasing to that Supreme Being, from whom they had received their Existence ; which Actions being directed according to the best Knowledge they had, it was as much as Divine Justice and Goodness would require from them.

AND this, the very Impressions of Reason, and the natural Notions of Justice common amongst Men, dictate to us : Common Equity inclines all Men to reward good Actions, and to be merciful to those who commit some Crimes thro' Ignorance or Inadvertency ; but to punish such as are of an heinous Nature, and committed presumptuously, wilfully, and of a preconceived Malice, and an open Contempt of the reasonable Dictates of wise and good Laws.

FOR of those who transgress any Laws, whether Divine or Human, this Guilt must reasonably be either extenuated or aggravated, according to the Knowledge of the Will of the Law-giver, and of the Duties enjoined ; so that those who will wilfully break such Laws, as, according to their own Knowledge, tend only to their own Welfare, and that of the whole Community, must
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stand convicted in themselves, that they have broke thro' the Bond of Harmony in the Society which they belonged to : And will not any reasonable Man judge, that whoever is a Member of a well-governed Society, and thus breaks thro' the wholesome Laws of it, ought to be cut off from it, that the remaining Part may enjoy its Advantages, freed from the Molestation of such corrupt Members ?

AND although this at once appears to be the Voice of natural Reason, yet without a Revelation (which Reason always falls in with) all our present weak Powers, and depraved Faculties, would but very imperfectly and obscurely find out, or discover what would it be for our Happiness to attend to.

FOR must not they, who have only some imperfect Knowledge of the Will of their Maker, labour under imperfect Ideas of his Purposes concerning them, and be under as imperfect Notions what they shall do to please him, or how to appease him, if they judge they have done something contrary to his Pleasure, when they find a Dissatisfaction in their own Minds, through acting contrary to their own inward Dictates ? Which can never be so well directed by natural Reason only, as they are, or may be, by a Declaration of the Will of God from himself ; tho' we never had any Declaration from God to Man, but what presently appeared to be agreeable to natural Reason, which is illuminated by it, as the Rising of the Sun dispels the Shades and Darknes of the Night ; and as the Day comes upon us, whether we sleep or wake, or whether

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we see it or not, till the Sun is in the Meridian; yet when we come to have our Eyes open, and our Senses awake, we then shall behold its Brightness and Glory.

GOD himself must be allowed to know the Way and Manner that would best answer his Purposes to redeem Mankind from their fallen Estate, and what would best suit with the intended Happiness of Man by his Redemption: And as, by Adam's Transgression, he and his Posterity were subjected to Death, so God has appointed, that, by the Obedience, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, we should be entitled to a Resurrection from the Grave, and, by our imperfect, if sincere, Obedience, according to the best of our Knowledge, be assured of an happy Immortality: Which glorious Advantages are brought to Light by the Revelation of the Gospel of Christ.

BUT, if these Advantages, as I have observed, are intended for all, who have not the open Declarations of it, as well as those who have, it may be enquired, ---- If Mankind may be saved, who have not the Knowledge of this Revelation, to what Purpose was the Knowledge thereof revealed at all; or why are we under any Obligations to believe it, or contract a Guilt for our Unbelief? To this I answer:

IT was impossible that Man's Redemption could be thus effected, and all the Transactions of it hid from the whole World, forasmuch as such Transactions could not be performed without some Part of the World's being concerned in it, since our blessed Redeemer was to suffer Death by the Hands of cruel and bloody Men; yet was his

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Goodness so wonderful, that his very Murderers were allowed an equal Share of his meritorious Death and Resurrection, upon the very same Terms with his own Disciples, as appears from his Praying, that his Father would forgive them, because they knew not what they did; or that, as they were ignorant of the Merit of his Death, and executed him as a Malefactor, because they thought him as such; therefore, by this his Prayer for them, and the Preaching of St. Peter * to them after his Resurrection, it plainly appeared, that even all concerned in his Execution were admitted to the Benefits arising from his Obedience, Death, and Resurrection, upon the same Terms with his Disciples themselves. Such is the unbounded Mercy of infinite Goodness, to all who will not maliciously oppose it! And must it not be necessary to make these Things known to them, in order to bring them to Repentance, as well as it was impossible to act them in an unknown Corner, where none could either be the Actors, or Witnesses of them? And, where this was transacted, it was also requisite, that he should establish his Authority, Power, and Mission, by sufficient Proofs of them, in Acts surpassing all human Powers, and thereby leave the World a sufficient Testimony of his Good-will to Mankind; so that none but such, who maliciously opposed such Truths, that carried along with them the greatest Testimonies that ever any Matter of Fact could be capable of, could contract any Guilt by their Unbelief; and, surely, it will be readily

* Acts iii. from Verse 14:

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allowed, that Guilt must necessarily and unavoidably fall upon such Men, as harden their Hearts against Conviction, and shut their Eyes against the Light.

BUT here another Question may arise: Since it is allowed possible for Men to be saved without the Knowledge of Revelation, and that there are so many amongst us, who contend against Revelation, and endeavour to prove it a Cheat and Delusion; wherefore then, if it be not so, did not God, foreseeing our Unbelief, make this Discovery and Revelation to some other Parts of the World, that might have been more glad to have embraced it, and made better Uses of the Benefit, and leave us in our darling Ignorance, that we might not have contracted so much Guilt, which, if what you say be true, we must necessarily fall under? I answer:

AS it was appointed he should die to redeem us, it may be questioned, whether any other Set of Men, in any Part of the World, could have been found to have effected it; and may we not venture to suppose, that God might foresee likewise, that even these Parts of the World, he has afforded an open Revelation to, have not yet made so bad Uses of it, as the other Parts would have done, if the Revelation thereof had been made to them; and that many more amongst them may be preserved from Guilt, by their Ignorance, than there would have been amongst us?

BUT I would not pretend to ascertain these Answers, but as they appear agreeable to the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, and to that Reason which God has in common given us, who created us, not to add any Happiness to himself, but that

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he might, by the most reasonable Methods, agreeable to our Free-Agency, afford us the best Means, whereby we may be made happy in himself; for we may safely conclude, that, in Wisdom and Mercy, he has performed all his Works, both of Creation and Providence.

AND this I shall endeavour to make appear, in the following Work; in which I have endeavoured to establish my own Opinion, by such sufficient Reasonings as, I think, will prove them, without entering into a Repetition of the modern Arguments, used to support the contrary, And I am persuaded, that, when the Prejudices of Pride, Guilt, and Licentiousness are removed, Truth will necessarily shine forth with the greater Lustre and Brightness, as the Sun strikes the Eye more forcibly, when the Obstruction of a black and darkening Cloud is removed from before it.

I SHALL, therefore, endeavour to overthrow the Force of such false Reasoning, that is frequently made use of to confound Light and Darkness, whereby our common Moralists would persuade themselves and others, that the Revelation, which we call Light, is real Darkness, and that their Pretensions to believe nothing, but what they can comprehend from natural Reason, is the true Light. ---- But, if natural Reason is the true Light, it can want no Illumination; and Revelation must be an Imposition, and, where it is received, must confound, and put out the Light of natural Reason. ---- And then it will follow, We must necessarily expect the greatest Logicians and Masters of Reason, from those Corners of the Earth, that have never been corrupted with pretended Revelation. ---- But, I am persuaded,

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our present Moralists would be unwilling to be thought to exchange their Abilities with such, as may be found in these remote Corners.

HOW then came they to be more enlightened? Could it be from the Darkneſs of Revelation?— I am perſuaded, that, had they been born, where a Revelation of God to Mankind had never been heard of, they might have been glad of an Opportunity to have embraced it, upon its firſt Offers, and could then have better judged, what was Light, and what was Darkneſs: But Light, by conſtant Shining, commonly dazzles weak Eyes, and makes them covet the Dark; which when they have choſen for their Favourite Retirement, they ought not to contend, that they, who continue in the Light, are in Darkneſs, and that their Darkneſs is the only Light.

TO ſupport their own Perſuaſion, that they are in the Light, and that they, that believe the Scripture-Revelation, are in the Dark, it is frequently affirmed by them, that the Scriptures, in many Places, contradict themſelves.

BUT this is an Error proceeding only from Men's different Notions about the true and genuine Interpretation of them, and in ſome Meaſure too, from Errors in the Tranſlations: Tho' I do not find that that Matter is mended from the pretended Interpreters of the Original Languages, ſince they commonly differ in their Sentiments, as widely as thoſe do, who only underſtand the common Tranſlation: And, as this alſo is an Handle for the Enemies of Revelation, I ſhall endeavour at once to remove theſe two Mountains of Difficulty, by preſcribing a Method, which I have obſerv'd myſelf, in all my former Works, and
which

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which I shall always strictly adhere to; 1st, To observe the Scope, Tendency, and Design of the Writer of the Scriptures; 2dly, To interpret no Places that are dark and obscure, to contradict those that are plain and easy to be understood; and 3dly, To interpret none to contradict the Attributes of the Divine Perfections.

AND I am persuaded, that had this Method been honestly pursued by all Men, who have attempted their Interpretation, without Views of private Interest, or Adherence to some particular Opinions, perhaps, through Prejudices of Education; or had none attempted their Interpretation, but honest, impartial, and disinterested Men, even whether they had understood the Original Languages or not, I say, I am persuaded, that then we should not have had so many Opposers of the Divine Authority of Revelation; since the Difference of Interpretations, and Errors in Translations, have been equally prejudicial to Truth, and, perhaps, have occasioned even some honest Moralists to deny the Authority of them, since they could not see the Remedy to heal these contradicting Absurdities in Translations and Interpretations, which Men have, upon these Accounts, quarrelled about.

FOR had not the Scriptures been thus torn to Pieces by forced Interpretations, and ambiguous and precarious Translations, they would then have appeared to all proper Judges, in their true Beauty, and have been acknowledged to contain a Scheme of the best Laws that could be possibly composed; and that they were far above all human Invention, and would therefore have been believed by all reasonable Men, to be the Word of God;

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God; and from thence there might have been a Way made for their greater Extent of Propagation, amongst the Nations of the Earth.

MY Design is to rectify Men's mistaken Nations, which wrong Interpretations of the Scriptures have produced, and to reconcile them with the Divine Attributes and Perfections; being very well satisfied, that whatever is contradictory to these, must be contrary to the Authority of Divine Revelation; and that whatever Translations, Interpretations, or Comments have been made, not agreeing with the Divine Attributes, must be human, and have no Command upon our Assent to force our Belief.

AND I wish all honest Moralists would but weigh these Observations, I should then hope, many of them would turn their Pens, to reform the Abuses put upon the Scriptures, and to justify, instead of condemning, those Divine Compositions.

I CONFESS, I am heartily sorry that I have been obliged to make the former, too just, Observations, that even the very Defendants of the Scripture-Revelation, and, I hope, I may say, the honest-designing Translators of them, should, without Design, become the chief Enemies of their Authority; which, according to the best of my Observations, must be owing to a Want of Caution in the aforesaid Method, which I have, in all my former Works, taken Care to observe, and shall in my future, if God permit me to go thro' more, and which I recommend to all in the like Attempts; and I doubt not, but that such an universal Practice would soon retrieve the Authority of the Divine Revelation from God to Mankind, and make it shine in its true Beauty
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and Brightness; which though many honest Pens have endeavoured to effect, yet so long as there remain so many, who pretend to be its Advocates, whose Interpretations carry along with them manifest Contradictions to the Divine Attributes, these will ever prove greater Enemies to the Reception of its Truths, than all the open Opposers of them.

BUT as I would always think as charitably of Mankind as I can judge reasonable, I think it proper to declare my Belief, that the Advocates for Revelation, who thus prove its Enemies, are without Design or View of injuring it; and that, if they had foreseen that such Effects would have attended their Works, they would willingly have suppressed them.

ON the other Hand, I would hope, that many honest-designing Moralists would discover Beauty, Concord, and Harmony, in the Revealed Will of God, and would throw off their former Prejudices, and gladly embrace its Dictates, if it was but put into a true Light, and freed from those thick Fogs and Mists wherewith it has been clouded, by false Interpretations.

AND as I am persuaded that the Methods, I have pursued, are built upon firm Foundations, so this, or any of the Attempts which I have made, or may hereafter make, I shall, in humble Sincerity, commit to the World, as my best Judgment, and only wish them Success, according to their Truth.

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T H E



T H E
CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER.

The INTRODUCTION.



T is universally agreed, that the Divine and Necessary Existence is a Being of infinite Holiness, Justice, Mercy, Goodness, &c. but it is as variously disputed, wherein these Attributes of the Divine Nature do consist; as if the common Acceptation of the Terms should have a different Signification, when made use of with Application to God, to what we conceive of them, when we use them with respect to ourselves.

BUT to what Purpose do we attribute these Terms to God, if it be not to communicate to one another such just *Ideas* of Him, as we are capable to conceive from them? And how can these Terms give us other *Ideas* of them, than

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what we look upon them to signify, when applied to ourselves?

WE are, indeed, under the Disadvantage of not finding these in Men to Perfection; but, the more any Man arrives towards it, in the common Acceptation of the Words of *Holiness, Justice, Goodness, and Mercy*, we conceive the more worthily of him, and do not imagine, that these Qualities can be of one Kind in one Man, and of another Kind in another; or that Authority and Power, in one Man over another, can ever change Arbitrariness and Tyranny into Justice, Goodness, Mercy, &c. but, on the other Hand, that Cruelty, supported by the greatest Power, is only more intolerable.

BUT, where Justice, Goodness, and Mercy, are joined to Power, they are always accounted, amongst us, to be the most God-like Qualifications.

BUT, as it cannot be expected, that any Man can arrive to Perfection, in this State, so the greatest Justice, Goodness, and Mercy of the best Men can only give us some faint Resemblance of those Attributes, which must shine in the utmost Perfection in God.

AND, though our Conceptions cannot reach the Perfections of them in God, since God's Perfections surpass our Ideas, yet their Nature

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can never be changed to contradict our Conceptions of them.

THE very Nature of Goodness implies Justice and Mercy; for, if a Man is observed to act in a Manner agreeable to Equity and Mercy, he presently gains the Character of a good Man: Nor can the infinite Justice of God be contrary to his concomitant Attributes of Love and Mercy, &c. which always concentre one in another, and may be always explained by one another.

IF, then, he is good, who is merciful and just, and, because just and merciful, he is holy and good; then he, that is perfectly one, is perfectly all; so that he, that is absolutely good, must be absolutely merciful, just, and holy; and, as these shine in Perfection in the Divine Essence, though they dazzle and confound our discerning Powers, yet this can never contradict our Conceptions of them.

WHOEVER, then, give God these Titles of his real Attributes, and yet maintain Doctrines (as they pretend, from his Revealed Will) contrary to Men's Apprehensions of these Attributes, seem only to compliment him with the Titles, while, by their Doctrines, they deny him the very Essence of them, by representing him (as some do, and many have done) as an Arbitrary Being, and an Almighty Tyrant: Still, I say, giving him these *Epithets* as

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Compliments, while, by their Interpretations of his Revealed Will, it is plain, they would represent his Justice, Goodness, and Mercy, as quite different from our Conceptions of them.

BUT such Interpretations, that carry along with them any Contradictions to our Conceptions of these Attributes, must be false; since no Declarations of God's Will to us, nor any Decree, Purpose, or Foreknowledge in God, can ever be contradictory to his own Attributes, or our Conceptions of them, when justly regulated.

HENCE some Men, from these wrested Interpretations, who have not searched into the true and genuine Meaning of these misrepresented Texts, but relying on the Judgment of these Interpreters, if they have not been drawn into the Current of the Error, they have sometimes, to shun it, denied the Scriptures to be the Revealed Will of God to Mankind; because they have from thence imagined, that the Scriptures both contradicted themselves and the Attributes of God.

THE Consequences of which Errors must be very pernicious; since the one leads Men to wrong Notions of God and Religion, and the other to a Disregard of his sacred Laws and holy Institutions; and ought therefore to be equally avoided, by a proper Care to observe,
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that no such wrested Interpretations be made, or received, that carry along with them Contradictions to the Divine Attributes; nor that any Part of the Scriptures be acknowledged to be truly interpreted; or translated, that cannot be made appear to be agreeable thereunto.

THE Scriptures, which are received as Canonical, we may observe, consist of History, Laws, and Precepts, as necessarily interwoven one with another, the Historical Accounts thereof having a close Connection with the Laws and Precepts therein contained: The Laws and Precepts are so Divine, and calculated for the Good of Mankind, that even the Enemies of Revelation have confess'd them to be the best Scheme of Laws in the whole World; and I cannot see, how they can deny the Inference necessarily flowing from thence, *That they must therefore be more than human Compositions.*

AND as it was necessary, that the Composers of the Scriptures should be assisted by the Divine Spirit, in laying down such Laws and Precepts, that should bring us to Happiness; and as the History of the Creation, and succeeding Changes, must necessarily be mixed with these Laws and Precepts, having so close a Connection one with another, to bring to our Understandings the Reason of Things; so, in the Historical Parts thereof, as far as the Writers of them were either personally acquainted with

with the Transactions, they wrote about, or had the Histories by them, of the Times and Things, of which they wrote, there was, perhaps, not always a Necessity of any other Inspiration, than a Fidelity above Temptation; and it is therefore very reasonable to believe, that many of the Historical Accounts, we have in the Bible, were wrote without any immediate Revelation from God, and were intended, by the Writers, to incite our Imitation of virtuous Actions, and to caution us against vicious ones.

WE are to distinguish diligently, in reading the Scriptures, between Precepts and mere Relations; and, even with Regard to Precepts, *St. Paul* has, in the Seventh Chapter of his First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, taught us not to confound the Divine Commands with his private Judgment; and, where there can arise any Difficulty, let us take Care to observe the aforesaid Rules, and then, I think, all reasonable Men may be sufficiently guarded against falling into Errors by false Interpretations of the Scriptures, and may likewise discover their Divine Authority.

'TIS very improbable, that *Moses* should be furnished, from either History or Tradition, with the Accounts, which he has given us, of the Creation, and antediluvian World; but that he wrote it from Inspiration, or a Revelation from God, is not only probable from his Want
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of other Helps, but also from the Conciseness, and yet Fulness, of the History itself; which clearly sets forth the Divine Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of God, in his Works of Creation and Redemption, which could not be discovered to us, but by God himself.

AND, that his Accounts thereof exactly correspond to what becomes the Dignity of the Divine Attributes, I hope to make appear, in the following Discourses: In which I shall,

I. SHEW God's End and Design in Creating Man; and why God did not create Man so, that he could not fall; or why God, foreseeing that Man would fall, did yet create him.

II. I SHALL consider *Adam* and *Eve's* Transgression, with their Humility and Shame for it; and God's Promise to redeem them, and to raise them and their Posterity to a Capacity of greater Advantages, than they enjoyed in their Purity.

III. I SHALL consider, why the Revelation of this Redemption has never yet been fully made known to such of *Adam's* Posterity, who had, by Successions of Generations, lost the Accounts of it, for Want of true Tradition; and shew, that, notwithstanding that, they are still under the Influences of the Benefits of Redemption.

S E C T. I.

Of the Creation of Man.

THE End and Design of God's Creating Man was, to serve and obey him; not that Man could thereby render his Creator the more happy, by his Service and Obedience, or make the least Addition to his absolute Perfections.

THE Creation of Man must, then, be an Act, not only of almighty Power, but of infinite Goodness to Man himself, exclusive of any Views in the great Creator to advance his own Happiness, which can neither admit of Addition, nor Diminution.

THIS must be plain, easy, and natural to conceive, and is the very Voice both of Reason and Scripture, that the *Perfections* and *Happiness* of our great Creator are necessarily incapable of Increase, and cannot possibly be added to, by any Acts of created Beings.

AND as no Acts of Duty and Obedience, from his Creatures, can possibly add any Thing to his Happiness; so neither can any Acts of Sin, or Disobedience, subtract any Thing from it, he for ever remaining unchangeable.

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As, then, there can be nothing added to our Creator's infinite Perfections, and therefore, in the Creation of Man, he could have no Views of advancing himself, it must necessarily follow, that God's End and Design, in creating Man, was to make him a Being, on whom he might bestow Happiness, and communicate such of his Perfections to him, that he should be qualified to receive; and that Man should be, by such Communications, made happy in his Creator.

AND, as this was certainly the original End of Man's Creation, therefore God endued him with Reason and Intelligence, above the rest of his Fellow-creatures, and committed the Care, and Management, and Government of them to his Trust; on the wise Conduct of which, together with his Allegiance and Duty to his Creator, in one particular Instance, in which God required his Obedience, depended the Continuance of him and his Posterity in original Purity and Happiness.

FOR, as he was created a reasonable Being, he must necessarily be endued with such a Will, as would enable him to chuse his own Actions, otherwise he could not be a *reasonable Creature*; for *Reason* and *Free-agency* are inseparably joined, so that, where the one is, the other will be; for, take away *Free-agency*, and that will imply *Irrationality* and perfect Machinery;

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THE End and Design of God's Creating Man was, to serve and obey him; not that Man could thereby render his Creator the more happy, by his Service and Obedience, or make the least Addition to his absolute Perfections.

THE Creation of Man must, then, be an Act, not only of almighty Power, but of infinite Goodness to Man himself, exclusive of any Views in the great Creator to advance his own Happiness, which can neither admit of Addition, nor Diminution.

THIS must be plain, easy, and natural to conceive, and is the very Voice both of Reason and Scripture, that the *Perfections* and *Happiness* of our great Creator are necessarily incapable of Increase, and cannot possibly be added to, by any Acts of created Beings.

AND as no Acts of Duty and Obedience, from his Creatures, can possibly add any Thing to his Happiness; so neither can any Acts of Sin, or Disobedience, subtract any Thing from it, he for ever remaining unchangeable.

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As, then, there can be nothing added to our Creator's infinite Perfections, and therefore, in the Creation of Man, he could have no Views of advancing himself, it must necessarily follow, that God's End and Design, in creating Man, was to make him a Being, on whom he might bestow Happiness, and communicate such of his Perfections to him, that he should be qualified to receive ; and that Man should be, by such Communications, made happy in his Creator.

AND, as this was certainly the original End of Man's Creation, therefore God endued him with Reason and Intelligence, above the rest of his Fellow-creatures, and committed the Care, and Management, and Government of them to his Trust ; on the wise Conduct of which, together with his Allegiance and Duty to his Creator, in one particular Instance, in which God required his Obedience, depended the Continuance of him and his Posterity in original Purity and Happiness.

FOR, as he was created a reasonable Being, he must necessarily be endued with such a Will, as would enable him to chuse his own Actions, otherwise he could not be a *reasonable Creature* ; for *Reason* and *Free-agency* are inseparably joined, so that, where the one is, the other will be ; for, take away *Free-agency*, and that will imply *Irrationality* and perfect Ma-

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chinery ; - and whatever so acts, can never be accountable for its Actions, or be rewarded, or punished for them, by a Judge of infinite Justice and Equity.

Now it appearing, as above observed, that God's Creation of Man must be an Act of infinite Goodness, and that he could not create him a reasonable Being, but must thereby make him a Free-agent, and that therefore it would be in his Power either to obey, or disobey his Creator, it will then necessarily appear reasonable, that his Obedience, or Disobedience, would either recommend him to his Creator's Favour, or lay him open to his Punishment: For, as his Acts must be Acts of his own Chusing, he must deserve either Reward, or Punishment, according to his Obedience, or Disobedience to the Command of his Creator, who had given him seasonable Cautions and Commands to refrain the Evil of Sin, and sufficiently warned him, what the Consequences of Disobedience would be; and it will then necessarily follow, that his Acts, whether of Obedience or Disobedience, could only affect himself, the Subjects which he was made Governor of, and his Posterity, of which he should become the Father; both of which must have their Tranquillity dependent, in a great Measure, upon the wise Conduct and well Government of their Prince and Father.

BUT hereby can no Change arise in his Creator,

ator, whether this Man obey, or disobey; his Creator has acted as an infinitely wise and good Being, in creating him with the Powers and Faculties of Intelligence, Reason, and Wisdom; and giving him sufficient Strength to have continued in that State of Purity, in which he had at first created him: And for any Man to find Fault with God, because he did not create Man so, that he could not possibly fall from his first Purity, is just the same, as to blame God that he endued him with Reason, and thereby made it possible for him either to obey, or disobey; which Acts being in his own Power and Choice, he must necessarily do the one, or the other; and, although God may be allowed to foresee what Man would do in this Case, yet God's Foresight thereof did not in the least lay any Constraint upon his Actions, but Man's Will was as free and unconstrained, as if God did not at all foresee how he would act.

IF God's Foresight had been the Occasion of his Actions, Man could, then, only have been a Machine, actuated only by God's Foresight, as the Spring that puts the Machine in Motion, which was confined so to act, as that it was impossible it should act otherwise: But if so, what then becomes of Man's Reason? Does he not answer the End and Design of his Creation? For what shall he be blamed, or commended? For what shall he either be rewarded, or punished?

IF he is under a Necessity of acting as he does, he answers the End of his *Maker*, who gave him that Necessity of acting: And shall a just Being create any Beings, capable of Rewards and Punishments from their Obedience, or Disobedience, and yet enjoin them such Laws, which he never intends they shall be able to keep; but that, by his Foreknowledge that they will not keep them, they shall be disabled from Obedience, and yet, for Disobedience, they shall be under the same Punishment, as if it had been in their own Power to have obeyed?

THIS appears ridiculous, monstrous, and absurd to imagine of the Supreme Creator, and very much beneath the Dignity of the Divine Being: His Foresight of our Actions, then, can never be the Occasion of them, but our Actions the Occasion of his Foresight. His *Foresight*, as we call it (to bring it within the Compass of our Conceptions) is no more, in the Almighty Creator, than a present Knowledge of all Things, all Things to him being present; and therefore all our Actions are present to him at one View, as they have been, are, or will be transacted; for the very same Reason that they have been, are, or will be transacted by our own Wills, and Power of Free-agency, and not by any compulsive Force from his Foreknowledge, any more than what we may properly call our Foreknowledge of
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the Succession of the Seasons, the Returns of Day and Night, the Lengthening and Shortening of the Days, the Configurations of the Planets, and the Eclipses of the Luminaries; all which we can foresee, or foreknow, and do as naturally expect: Yet our Foresight of them is not in the least the Occasion that they do so happen, nor lays the least Constraint upon them so to fall out; but, because they will so happen, it is, that therefore we foresee that they will so succeed.

IT may be replied, That these Things are foreseen by us, because they are settled in the constant Laws of Nature, which, by continued Observations, have been found to keep regular and established Laws; and that, by a repeated Succession of their orderly Revolutions, it is discovered that they act by certain Rules, which they cannot, of themselves, ever deviate from; and as they have acted, and do still so continue to act, therefore we foresee, how they will still continue to succeed.

THEN it is not our Foresight, that occasions them so to act; but the Laws which they are under, that produce our Foresight; and so it is the same, as is before observed, of God's Foresight, that it is not, because he foresees our Actions, that lays any Constraint upon us, but because, by our own free Wills, we will act, he foreknows our Actions, if we may so term it, to make it agreeable to our Apprehension.

FOR

FOR if we can foresee Things, in the common Course of Nature, that will certainly come to pass amongst the inanimate Globes of the Universe, may we not allow the infinite Being and Almighty Creator, of both them and us, to be possessed of all the Knowledge of Things past, present, and to come, even at one, always, present View? And, if our Knowledge can reach the Foresight of the common Configurations and Appearances of the *inanimate Globes of our System*, and yet be no Cause, or Occasion of the Configurations and Appearances; then how shall it be thought unreasonable, that God should foresee all the Transactions of the rational Part also of his Creation, when directed by Reason, without their being under any Constraint, or Necessity of acting, because he foresees how they will act, as well as we foresee the Successions of Seasons, &c. which are under no Necessity of their constant Revolutions, from our Foreknowledge of them?

IF, then, God foresees all the Transactions of his Creatures, he must necessarily foresee, when he created *Adam* in a State of Purity, and made him a reasonable Creature, that he would certainly fall from his first Purity, in which he created him.

IF any Man shall ask, Why God, foreseeing that the Man, he would create, would certainly

tainly fall from his first Purity, and plunge himself, his Subjects, and Posterity into Vanity, and subject them to Misery and Slavery; why therefore this Foresight did not restrain God in his Design of creating him? I answer:

I AM persuaded, and fully believe, that this Foresight would certainly have induced his Creator to have with-held his Hand in the Creation of *Adam*, since he could have no further Views, in the Creation of him, than to make him and all his Posterity capable of being *happy*, had he not likewise foreseen *Adam's* Shame and Humility (of which in the next Section) that thereby he would render himself an Object of his Mercy, and thereupon likewise fully intended and determined, by an Act of *infinite Love and Mercy*, to redeem him and his Posterity, and to restore them to the most valuable Means of *Reconciliation*; upon which it would be in the Choice of every one of *Adam's* Descendants to accept the Means of Grace, and Opportunity of Mercy, to be communicated to them by an inward Light in the promised *Seed of the Woman*, *JESUS CHRIST*, to guide and direct them in the Choice of their Actions, by which they should stand, or fall, in the Judgment of their own Consciences.

AND, though all *Adam's* Posterity are, by his Transgression, subjected to manifold Evils in this Life, and to Death itself; yet the glorious and infinitely wonderful *Redemption*, by *Jesus*

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Jesus Christ, has placed all his Posterity in a Condition of more than equal Happiness with *Adam* in his Purity, since the Promises, made to an Obedience to that second Covenant and Dispensation of Mercy, are vastly greater than the Promises, made to *Adam's* Obedience, were.

S E C T. II.

Of Man's Transgression, and Redemption.

NOW God had created *Adam* in a State of Innocence and Purity, and placed him on the Earth, which was then called *Paradise* (for the whole Earth, at that Time, was capable of being a Paradise, or Place of Delights and Pleasures) notwithstanding he could be placed but upon one Part of the Globe, and where he was placed, was called *The Garden of Eden*; which Garden abounded with all Things, that could yield the Pleasures of Life, in all the Delights of the bodily Senses, as far as the Capacities of our first Parents could wish for, or desire, in the State and Condition, they were created in: And likewise the Trees and Herbs of the Garden were so created, that their Seeds were in themselves, for the Increase and Multiplication of their Kinds, to replenish the Earth,

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as the Inhabitants thereof should increase and multiply to replenish it; who might remove and plant whatever seemed most agreeable to them; which seems to be all they were to be employed in, by their Orders to *dress* the Garden, or to see to order the Increase of the Trees and Herbs, that produced the Fruits, from which their Pleasures and Satisfaction were to arise.

AND now, as our first Parents were placed in this Garden, there was Plenty of all necessary Provisions, which could give them either Pleasure, or Satisfaction; and nothing therein was denied them, that could afford either.

BUT there was one Fruit only, amongst the rest, that was of such a poisonous Quality, that, if they should eat of that Fruit, their Faculties would be affected, and their Immortality would cease; of this *only*, God commanded them, that they should not eat, plainly telling them the Consequence, that, *In the Day, they eat thereof, they should surely die*, or become mortal.

AND the very Nature of a rational Creature implies a Being, that ought to have some Law, or Laws, to be governed by; because the Happiness of rational Creatures must consist in their Conformity and Obedience to the Laws of just Government, which always implies Rewards to the Obedient; but, where

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there is no Law, there is no Government, and, instead of Happiness, Confusion will arise.

Now our first Parents did not long content themselves with the Enjoyment of all Things allowed, and that suited only with their present Pleasure and Happiness, but transgressed the Commandment given them, by eating the pernicious Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

BUT it is observable, as soon as they had transgressed the Commandment given them, though, before, they had flattered themselves with not only escaping the Punishment threatened, but also to become as Gods in Knowledge, that they quickly found themselves mistaken, and imposed on by a subtle Enemy, and acknowledged their Shame, and Inability to vindicate their Proceedings to their Maker; and therefore, instead of pleading their Innocence, or defending their Act of Disobedience, they, immediately upon being charged with the Fact, own their Nakedness, and plead guilty, and acknowledge their own Insufficiency to stand in Judgment against their Maker's just Accusations, and therefore throw themselves at his Foot-stool, to be dealt with in Justice according to their Deserts, if Mercy, which they could not presume to ask, could not be granted by a free Act of infinite Love and Goodness.

FOR it may be observed, that *Adam* and *Eve*, upon their Transgression, immediately discovered,

covered, and owned their Nakedness, which was, perhaps, of two Kinds, both of Body and Soul; and that the Nakedness of their Bodies they seek to conceal, by cloathing themselves with Aprons made of Fig-leaves; but the Nakedness of their Souls they found themselves unable to cover, being robbed of the Robes of Innocence and Righteousness, and so become deprived of the Image of their Maker; upon which Account they sought to flee from his Presence, as being unable to answer to the Charge of Guilt, which, their Consciences told them, he had to lay against them.

So that, when they heard the Voice of God in the Garden, they found themselves self-condemned, and saw the Nakedness both of their bodily and spiritual Condition; and, instead of disputing by their natural Strength of Reason, and Arguments from their *new-acquired Knowledge*, to make a Vindication of their Act of Disobedience, they answer to God's Enquiry, *Adam, Where art thou?* as if, in our Way of speaking, God had said: *Adam, What is the Reason thou endeavourest to escape from my Presence, which usually gave thee the most delightful Satisfaction? In Answer to which, being Thunder-struck at the Consciousness of Guilt, Adam, trembling, answered: I heard thy Voice in the Garden; and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.* As if he had said: When I heard

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thy Voice in the Garden, I found in myself an Unfitness to appear in thy Presence, and could not presume to stand before thee, because I was naked, or had lost those innocent Qualifications, that used to be the Ornaments, that rendered me fit for thy Appearance; and therefore I fled to hide myself.

Thus, in Answer to the Question, God put to *Adam*, when he enquired where he was, *Adam's* Answer not only shewed a Consciousness of his Guilt, and an Acknowledgment of it, in his Confession of Nakedness, but also his Desire to flee from the Punishment of it, by hiding himself, as not being able, nor having any Presumption, to plead for himself.

THEREFORE, when God put the next Query, --- *Who told thee, that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the Tree, whereof I commanded, that thou shouldst not eat?* *Adam* openly owned the Fact, and, in the lowest Submission, confessed, that *the Woman*, he gave him, had given it to him, and he did eat; which Fact *Eve* likewise, in the humblest Manner, confessed she was guilty of, through her being *beguiled by the Serpent*.

So that they both owned the Fact, upon the first Charge, and confessed themselves naked, and not fit to appear in his Presence; and that their Nakedness was the Reason of their

their Endeavour to hide themselves from it ; As if they had said, in our Language, We confess, that we have committed the Sin of Disobedience to thy just Command, and are unable to vindicate, or excuse ourselves ; nor have any Thing to alledge in our own Defence, in suffering ourselves to have the Persuasion, or Suggestions, of a Creature to over-balance the Commands of thee our most bountiful and benevolent Creator ; but do find, that we are hereby become naked, and destitute of those Robes of Innocence and Righteousness, wherewith thou hadst clothed us : And, as we found it a Shame also to appear naked in Body, we have made ourselves Aprons of Fig-leaves to cover our bodily Nakedness ; but as for the Nakedness of our Souls, which we endeavoured to conceal, by hiding ourselves, we find we are altogether unable to cover ; we are guilty, and unable to flee from thy Justice, to which we are now obnoxious, and therefore leave ourselves to thy just Sentence of Death, and have not the least Claim to presume upon thy Mercy.

THIS Shame and Humility of our first Parents, who, not persisting in their Error, but confessing their Nakedness, without presuming to ask Mercy, but waiting the Execution of the Sentence against their Disobedience, thereby (notwithstanding the irreversible Sentence of Mortality, which fell upon them and their Posterity) brought down the Divine Grant

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Grant of *infinite Mercy and Love*, to be exhibited to them and all their Posterity, in that most reviving Promise of a *Redeemer* to come of the *Seed of the Woman*, to *bruise the Serpent's Head*.

WHICH Promise of God to our first Parents may be thus paraphrased: Since ye have made this humble Acknowledgement of your Shame and Nakedness, and have not, by presuming to vindicate your Disobedience, turned it to Rebellion, but have intirely disapproved of your Act; I will again cloath you with my *Son's Righteousness*, whom I will cause, in Fulness of Time, to be *made Flesh of the Seed of the Woman*; who will perform the *Law of Righteousness* for you (which you now wish you had continued in) and he shall also suffer in your Stead; whereby you shall again be restored to a *Covenant of Mercy*, obtain a *Resurrection to Life*, and be made capable to enjoy an *happy Immortality*. And, in Confirmation that I will thus cover your spiritual Nakedness, behold, I have made you *Coats of Skins*, to cover your bodily Nakedness also.

AND now I cannot pass without a seasonable Inference.

BEHOLD the Force and Efficacy of Humility, Shame, and Sorrow for Sin! When, by them, the very Powers of Heaven are bowed

bowed to raise and exalt the Lowly, and to find a Way and Means for Mercy! *Mercy!* ---- Of which we are all born *Heirs*, as well as we became *Heirs* of the Death of *Adam*; for our *promised Redeemer* hath taken away the *Sting of Death*, triumphed over the *Grave*, and opened a *Door of Salvation* to all that obey him.

C O R O L L A R Y.

IF any shall think the Yoke of CHRIST heavy, and his Task hard, who requires that we should die to the World and live unto God, and mind the World only for a common Support, as a Traveller does his Inn; and set our Hearts upon the Treasures of Heaven, purchased and laid up for us by him in the Conclusion of our Journey: I say, if any shall think this too hard a Task, and shall rather chuse to take up with the Affairs of this Life for his ultimate Good and chief Happiness; let him not blame *Adam*, because he must leave this World, since he has been invited by *Christ*, either inwardly, or outwardly, or both, to accept of ten Thousand Times more valuable Treasures, and on Terms as easy to be complied with and obeyed, so far as will by him be accepted, as it was for *Adam* to have kept the Law given to him; therefore wish not thou hadst been *Adam*, to have kept his Law, since thou hast a Law given

given thee, which thou art as capable of keeping, as thou wouldst have been to have kept the Law given to *Adam*, and from the Observation of which thou hast a certain Prospect of far better Rewards.

S E C T. III.

Of the Universal Redemption by
CHRIST.

IT is before observed, that, as all *Adam's* Posterity are, through his Transgression, born Heirs of Death; so, by the Merits of **CHRIST's** Obedience, Death, and Resurrection, they are also born Heirs to that Redemption, which he purchased for all, who do not wilfully sell, or forfeit their Birth-rights, whether they enjoy the Revelation of this Redemption, or not.

- For, where the Revelation thereof has not yet reached, it can only be expected, that such of *Adam's* Posterity be subject to the Law of Reason and natural Religion; and, though they are assisted by that inward Light of **JESUS CHRIST**, that gives every Man, that comes into the World, a Choice in the Regulation of his Actions, yet it can be only a glimmering Light to those, who want the open Declarations of **CHRIST's** Good-will and

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and Purposes to them, compared with what we enjoy, that have the Advantages from Revelation, and that thankfully embrace it ; for we have the Opportunity of Information, and Improvements in the Knowledge of the Will of our *blessed Lord*, being assured of his good Designs and Purposes to bring all, that obey him, to a blessed Resurrection and Immortality.

IF, then, it be a Blessing to have the Benefits of God's Will revealed to us, as it certainly is to all who will truly embrace it : ---- If it should be asked, Wherefore then hath not God thus extensively revealed it to the whole World ; which he could equally have done, if he had seen it needful, being infinite in Power and Goodness ; yet, notwithstanding, do we not see, that, though we enjoy this blessed Light, there are Multitudes of others in the World, that do not discern it, and have no other Guide, than the Religion of Nature ? ---- If, then, such Revelation was necessary for the Well-being of Mankind, why does not God, for the Good of his Creatures, extend this Revelation through the whole Earth ? I answer :

THERE is no Doubt, but God can tell best how, and where, and when, and in what Degree to reveal himself to his Creatures, whether inwardly or outwardly ; and though all good Men desire, that the same Light,
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they enjoy, might be equally enjoyed and made a good Use of by all, yet they may rest satisfied with God's Providential Care, and remember, that his Proceedings are not to be censured : So that every one ought to rest satisfied in doing his best Endeavours to be obedient to God, and useful to Mankind, and trust that God will raise Instruments for such Purposes, when it shall be better to make his Will known to all, than any longer to suffer them to remain in Ignorance.

YET, I think, I may venture to offer one Reason, to vindicate God's Mercy and Justice in still retaining the Light of the Gospel-Revelation from so great a Part of the Nations of the Earth.

AND this I shall assign to the Abuses, that the glorious Light of the Gospel hath met with, even amongst us of this Nation, so much blessed with it, and almost all other Nations of Christendom ; when even many, amongst us, become dazzled with it, and, shutting their Eyes against it, call for Natural, instead of Revealed Religion ; though such Conduct discovers rather a Desire of throwing off all Restraint, than of observing any Law, either Natural or Revealed.

BECAUSE whoever truly adhered to Natural Religion, have always been ready to embrace a Revelation ; since the true Sense of
Natural

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Natural Religion always makes Men desirous of being informed beyond the mere Law of Nature.

* ONE of the greatest of the *Heathen* Philosophers of old declared his Desire and Expectation of a Revelation from God to Mankind, finding the Defects of all his Searches into Natural Religion; though he was, probably, able to penetrate as far, as the most sagacious of our Modern Reasoners.

AND as such a Revelation would certainly have been received with *great Joy and Gladness*, by those Philosophers, had they lived in the Times and Places of its Promulgation; so we find it was so embraced by all good and religious Men of all Nations, and, by *such*, was esteemed as *good Tidings of great Joy and universal Salvation*.

AND, did not too many, in the Christian Part of the World, *chuse Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil*, we should have Reason to hope, that the Light of the Gospel would be more universally received.

BUT have we not too many professed Christians, who openly acknowledge their Belief of Revelation, who grow lukewarm, cold,

* *Plato.*

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and careless in their Duty, and give the Lye, in their Actions, to their Profession and Pretensions ?

AND have not Examples been ever found of far more Force, than the greatest Pretensions and Instructions without an exemplary Life ?

Now, if we thus turn our Eyes into the professed Christian World, and behold the Abuses of the Gospel-Revelation, what Reflection on GOD's Justice can we be able to cast, for still retaining it from other Parts of the World ?

MAY not a Deprivation of this Light from others, for whom Mercy is purchased, as well as for us, give them a Desire to be better informed, and raise in them a Thirst after it, and a Willingness to embrace it, if they could enjoy the Opportunity ?

AND may we not reasonably suppose, that God knows best how to rescue them from their Ignorance and Darkness, whether in this Life, or in their Removal hence into a greater Light, and an happier Estate, than they could either here expect, or wish for ?

AND shall not many of them rise up in Judgment against all Despisers and Rejecters of the Light, that was offered them, in the
Dispen-

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Dispensation of the glorious Gospel of CHRIST? --- Which was rejected by them as vain, or needless, either in open Profession, as by the *Deists*, and too many of their inconsiderate Writers; or else in secret Practice, as by the Hypocrite; or in publick Profaneness, as by those given up to Vice and Debauchery.

IT therefore concerns all true Christians in the World, who thankfully receive the Light of the Gospel as *good Tidings of great Joy*, to endeavour to regulate their Actions by it; and, if they desire its Propagation, let them live Lives worthy of Imitation, and thereby reform its Abuses, where it is enjoyed; and then may we reasonably hope, that Truth, unobstructed, would be easily diffused; and that God would assist our Endeavours to extend it to the *uttermost Parts of the Earth*.



P O S T.



POSTSCRIPT.



AMONGST the Objections, concerning our Modern Moralists, to the Scriptures, there is yet a common Maxim amongst them, that the Scriptures contain several Mysteries above our Comprehensions; and their *Reason* directs them to believe nothing, which cannot be made demonstrable to the Reach of their Capacities.

BUT why will they believe any Mysteries in Nature; and why do their present Senses oblige them to it; since all Nature, in itself, is so far mysterious to our nicest Reason of Things at present, that, were the Belief of nothing to be admitted, but what we can comprehend and make demonstrable, we must not then believe, even, what our present Senses testify the Truth of.

As for Instance: Let them give me a full and clear Account, how the Animal Life is conveyed through the Modification of a Material

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terial Body ; and how that Material Body is fitted, through the several Bones, Sinews, Arteries, Veins, Muscles, and Skin, to admit of Life, and entertain spiritual and immaterial Existence superior to itself, and thereby become capable of *Perception*, *Action*, and *Motion* : If they can account for this, and leave it without a Mystery, their Scheme may, perhaps, be judged more probable. If they can form and modify any Matter (of which there is enough ready prepared to their Hands) that shall, upon their Modification thereof, become perceptive, active, and self-moveable, I will then acknowledge it no Mystery above their Comprehensions ; but, if they cannot do this, I shall still believe it to be so : And if they will still believe nothing, that they cannot comprehend, let them not believe, that there is any such Thing, as *Matter* ever being endued with Life, or so modified, as that it could, from that Modification, receive Life, and become active : I say, if they cannot comprehend which Way this is effected, so as to imitate and learn to perform the same, and yet will believe no Mysteries, let them not believe that themselves, or any Matter whatsoever, are in Being, or have any Existence, in the Manner which their Senses discover ; but that they are only something actuated by mere Notions ; and that nothing is real, that they feel, see, hear, smell, or taste ; so that, if you would avoid the Believing of Mysteries, as a Rock of Offence,

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you unavoidably run upon the Disbelief of your own Senses, and lay yourselves under an Obligation to account for a greater Mystery, *the Deception of your Senses*, than you endeavoured to avoid by not believing those Mysteries, which are represented to you by your Senses, because above your Comprehension.

THUS you are driven from one Mystery to another, and yet will believe none; you must then, upon this Scheme, come to believe that you *are* not at all, or that there is not any *Being* at all, because you find it mysterious to comprehend the Manner of its Existence.

YOU must, then, be forced to retire from this Shelter, because it will afford you no Refuge; since you cannot account how Non-Realities can ever raise Ideal Fancies of such Pleasure, Pain, Joy, Grief, Hope, or Fear; which necessarily arise through the common Accidents, that may please, or disturb the Connexion and Union of the Body, and the Animal Life annexed to it.

FOR can you believe you have no Feeling, because you cannot comprehend which Way it is conveyed; when, upon the Touch of Fire, or a Stroke, you presently express your Sense thereof? But, if you cannot account for the Reason of these Things, and shew how you came to be made more perceptive than

than a Stone, or Piece of Wood, which is passive and unconcerned under all Manner of Impressions ; and if you believe yourselves to be endued with the Sense of Feeling, and receiving Pain or Pleasure, and cannot yet comprehend by what Way, and after what Manner it is conveyed, you must believe what you cannot comprehend ; and if you will not believe that you can feel, you must believe that your Sense deceives you, and so come into the Belief of a greater Mystery ; so that you are again necessarily driven to believe what you cannot demonstrate.

IN the next Place, you will be obliged to deny that you can *hear*, or that there can be any Sound, because you cannot comprehend how the Sound is propagated, and the Ear organised to receive it, no more than you can account for the different Sounds that are raised by various Motions, Touches, and Reverberations, &c. of several Sorts of Matter, Metals, and Instruments, from the several Ways of their being touched, or struck upon : --- These Things being out of your Comprehension (since we only know by our Senses, that they are so) you are then, upon your own Maxim, to believe there are no such Things.

If you will pretend to account for Sounds, you must give us as great a Variety of the Accounts of them, as there are various Qualities in every individual Sort of Matter, from
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whence

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whence the Varieties of the Sounds are produced; and, even, you must be Judges what Kind of Sound may be produced from any Matter or Instrument, you never yet *before* saw, and before you ever yet heard any Sound produced from it; but you shall know from your *Reason*, at first Sight, that such or such Manner of Touch, upon such Matter or Instrument, will produce such or such a Sound; which you shall as naturally hear in your Imagination, as you actually can do, when the Touch is given: If this can be done, you will make some small Advances towards an Explication of Sounds.

OR if they will account for the various Sounds and different Tones, even, amongst those of the same Houses and Neighbourhoods, by which we can readily distinguish those, we are acquainted with, one from another, as well as by their different Faces; or if they can tell me for what Reason such and such Movements of their own Tongues and Lips, with the several Expulsions of their Breath, form such and such Words and Accents; or if they can shew me why one Man's Tongue should make a different Reverberation in the Atmosphere from another's, which is exercised in expressing the same Words; I will then allow them not to look upon these Things as Mysteries.

AGAIN; Let them likewise account for the Light of the Sun, how it became entertained

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tained in our Atmosphere; and after what Manner it was made capable to refract and reflect its Rays, and how the Eyes are organised and adapted to receive them; and by what Means any Objects are represented to our Sight: If they cannot do this, let them either cease to disbelieve Mysteries, or else believe there is no such Thing as Light in the World.

WITH REGARD to the various Colours, which the Art and Experience of Man has attained, by Learning, to compose, imitate, and produce, the Agents of them can never give the Reasons why the Matter, they *use* to produce the Colour, has the expected Effect: Only from constant Experiments they have found, that such Materials have produced such Colours; but no one, of the greatest Reason and Sagacity, can, without Learning or Experience, produce any given Colour upon a Piece of white Cloth, but would find it a Mystery, he could not perform. But he, that knows nothing of *Dying*, and yet will believe no Mystery, let him try, without Learning or Experience, to produce any given Colour: If he cannot, let him acknowledge there are Mysteries in Nature, or believe there is neither Light nor Colours in the World.

THUS it is a Mystery, to a Man that was born *blind*, to hear you talk of Light and Colours; yet, because it is constantly confirmed to him, that there are really such Things in
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Being;

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Being, he believes them, not because he can comprehend any Thing of the Manner of their Existence; and it is as impossible for you to comprehend the Manner by which they have a Being, and how they are conveyed to our Senses. Tell me, therefore, what you imagine of those Things, you cannot account for; whether they are out of the Reach of your Reason, and therefore incomprehensible; or whether there are no such Existences, as them, and your Senses, in the World?

I MIGHT, likewise, desire these great Asserters of Natural Reason to discover a demonstrative Account of the various *Effluvia* of Flowers, Herbs, and Perfumes, with the contrary offensive, noxious, and disagreeable Scents, how they become sensibly affecting to the Smell; and likewise how Meats and Drinks become agreeable, or disagreeable to the Taste.

OR let them tell me, if this would not be a Mystery and a Paradox, to any Man that was born without these Senses, and who never enjoyed them, to hear others talk of them; when, from all their Observations, they could never furnish him with a true Idea of these Things; but the Sense of them must still remain as much a Mystery to him, as the Manner, by which they receive them, does to them? If so, by the former Rule, this Man is not to believe, that others can either smell or
taste,

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taste, because he cannot comprehend what they mean by it, or after what Manner the Smell and Taste is conveyed.

So then, if you will believe nothing, that you cannot comprehend, you must not believe you have any Senses belonging to you, nor even that you have any Being at all: But the Absurdity of this, the bare Mention of it is sufficient to shew.

INDEED, we learn by Experience, how several secondary Causes are implanted in Nature by the wise Author thereof; and, by long Study and repeated Observations, can give some imperfect Accounts why such and such Causes produce such and such Effects; or from several Effects, we find produced, we, generally (though differing in our Sentiments) assign such particular Causes to particular Effects; yet so far are we from ascertaining any Thing, that, though the Laws of Nature are daily sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein, yet whoever make the greatest Discoveries, must at last confess, that *the Works of God are wonderful, and past finding out.*

IF, then, the very Works of Nature, which God has put under established Laws, are mysterious to us, how shall we expect to account for the Mysteries of the *Divine Existence and Perfections*; or expect, that we should

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should comprehend what he has thought proper to declare of himself to us, any more than we can expect, that a Man born *blind*, by our Description of Light and Colours, should be made capable to comprehend them, as they really are?

BUT, then, it is again asserted, that the Testament of CHRIST, which we call the Revelation of the Gospel, contains not only Things above our Reason, but contrary to our Reason; and, if they may believe Mysteries, which are only above their Reason, yet they can never believe what is contradictory to Reason, which some of the Defenders of Revelation would oblige them to; as, for Instance, that Three is One, and One is Three, is so manifest a Contradiction to Reason, that they can never acquiesce in it.

'TIS true, it has been so taught by many Asserters of the Truth of Revelation, but scarcely ever intended, that we should believe it in the same Sense that we judge of Numbers common amongst us, but in a different Way; which as they themselves could not account for, you are left only to look upon it as other Mysteries, and to believe it as such.

BUT some, who could not content themselves with the Belief of Contradictions in Mysteries, have, to avoid that, divided the
blessed

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bleſſed Trinity into Superiority and Inferiority of Perſons, and thereby, I think, and, as I hope, I ſhall make appear, have run into a greater Error.

FOR the Word, *Perſons*, in the Trinity, has only been introduced by human Authority, in Compliance with the human Capacity; which ſeems warrantable from the frequent Practice of the Penmen of the Scriptures, who commonly uſe the very ſame Method, in aſcribing to God the ſame Members common to us.

AND, though it is common to aſcribe the ſame Members to God, that conſtitute an human Perſon, yet there are few (beſides Children) who do not eaſily diſcover the Metaphor, or who are ſo deceived by it, as to look upon God to be in the Form or Shape of a Man.

So that few will quarrel with thoſe Expreſſions in Scripture, that repreſent him as ſuch; yet we find, that many have taken Offence from the Application of the Word *Perſons*, which (by the ſame Metaphor) may be applied to the THREE, that are ſaid to *bear Record in Heaven; The FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY SPIRIT*; but, as it is alſo affirmed, that theſe *Three* are ONE, ſome have from thence denied the Authority of that Text, while others have thrown off the Belief of the Scripture-Revelation itſelf.

Now,

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Now, as above observed, the Application of the Word *Persons* was, at first, used by the Church, as warrantable from the foresaid Practice of representing God with the Members of an human Body: From which afterwards, thro' vulgar Apprehensions, it came to be imagined, that these Three Persons were distinct and separate Agents in all personal Properties.

MANY of late, to avoid maintaining the Doctrine of the Trinity, so as to contradict Reason, have followed the famous Dr. *Clarke*, in his Construction put upon the Words of St. *John*; *And these Three are One*; that is, say they, One in Agreement, &c. as if they were distinct and separate Beings one from another, only agreed in one and the same Concurrence; as a Man and his Wife are said to be One, though two Persons, being one in Agreement, and under one and the same Concern in all Affairs of Life. Thus,

THE aforesaid Author, in a modern Treatise, stiled, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, has represented the Three Persons of the Trinity as superior and inferior one to another, yet maintaining the Divinity of all.

AND, because his Works have been so much adhered to, even by many of the learned Part of the Nation, and many have, from thence, fallen into Notions not consistent

tent with the Holy Scripture, I shall endeavour

To shew the Weakness and Insufficiency of the Foundation, upon which Dr. *Clarke* builds his Doctrine of Superiority and Inferiority in the Persons of the Trinity.

IN the second Page of his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, he lays it down as a Proposition, in a Quotation from Bishop *Bull*, viz. " That the SON and HOLY SPIRIT " derive their Original from the FATHER." If this Proposition be true, the Son and Holy Spirit had a Beginning; and therefore were created.

BUT, in Page the fourth, he draws a Conclusion from this Proposition (upon which the whole Fabrick of his Work is built) viz. That " these Things do not destroy the Divinity of the Son, for he also is in that " One, and First, and Only One; as being " the Only Word, and Wisdom, and Brightness " (of the Glory) of him, who is the One, " and the Only One, and the First."

Now, if he also is in that One, and First, and Only One; as being the Only Word, and Wisdom, and Brightness (of the Glory) of him, who is the One, and the Only One, and the First; he must always be in that One, and First, and Only One, as being the Only Word,

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and

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and *Wisdom*, and Brightness (of the Glory) of him, who is the *One*, and the *Only One*, and the *First*: And, if he is in him, he could receive no Original from him; for whatever is in the Divine Nature always has been in it, and can admit of no Original; for whatever Existence had an Original from the Supreme Being, can never have the Properties of the Deity communicated to it; since the Properties of the self-existent Essence are necessarily *incommunicable*, and nothing can be in the Divine Essence, which does not properly and actually belong to the Divine Essence itself: and thus much his very Words themselves prove: I would then ask, How the Son came to have his Original from the Father? If he had an Original from him, then, before that Original, the Father must be without his *Brightness* and *Glory*, till he gave him this Original; since here it is confessed, that he is the *Only Word*, and *Wisdom*, and Brightness (of the Glory) of him, who is the *One*, and the *Only One*, and the *First*: I say, If then the Son had an Original, the Father must be an Eternity (*à Parte ante*, or *before*) without his *Only Word* and *Wisdom*, *Brightness* and *Glory*. But, as the Nature of the Divine and Infinite Perfections can admit of no Additions, and therefore, if in the Son consisted his *Wisdom*, and the *Brightness of his Glory*; his *Wisdom* and the *Brightness of his Glory* must needs eternally be with him, and in him, and

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and be of the same Essence, instead of being added to it after an Eternity *à Parte ante*.

So then it will unavoidably follow, that the Son is Eternal, as well as the Father, &c. and therefore could derive no Original; and indeed, in a subsequent Part of the said Book, the great Doctor, being puzzled with the Intricacy of his first Proposition, seems inclinable to change it, by which he still runs himself into greater Perplexities, when he calls the Son Self-originated; which signifies a Beginning which commenced from himself: But how any Being can be the Author of its own Original, or how any Being, that had an Original, could be the Procurer of it for himself, I am at a Loss to frame the least Idea of: If any of his Followers can reconcile this with *Reason* (since they are the Sticklers, who pretend to believe nothing contrary to it) I will then acknowledge their Reason superior to what I am able, at present, to comprehend.

BUT, till then, I must look upon it as a Mistake in the great Doctor; whose Foundation being wrong laid, he is thereby led, through his whole Book, into Labyrinths of perplexing Contradictions and Intricacies.

I MUST profess a respectful Esteem for that great and learned Man, and for some Parts of his laborious and valuable Works; but in this I cannot, upon my best Judgment, discover

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discover any Thing of Reason, or Strength of Argument to support his *Proposition*. Whether I have discovered the Weakness of his Foundation, and left his Building unsupported, I must leave to the discerning Judgment of my Readers.

BUT the Scruple of Believing the Doctrine of the Trinity contrary to Reason I shall, perhaps, in another Tract (to which it will more properly belong) endeavour to clear: But shall be far from attempting to bring it within the Compass of our Comprehensions, having, I think, before proved, That even all Things in Nature are mysterious; and, if so, then much more must it be impossible to find out the Almighty to Perfection; for it is as impracticable for a finite Being to comprehend Infinity, as it is to have Infinity itself communicated to it.

LET us, then, wait, in humble Acknowledgement of our own Imperfections, for the Enlargement of our Knowledge of the Divine Mysteries, in a future State; where our Capacities may be eternally exercised in the Improvements of our Comprehensions, and yet find no End of their Increase (for the Pleasures arising from Infinity can have no End) and, though for ever improving, they will always find something sufficient for future Improvements in the Mysteries of the Divine Perfections: Which seems to be designed for one Part of our Happiness, that we may always,

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ways, with Wonder and Admiration, praise and adore the infinite *Unfathomableness* of our great Creator, the only *Fountain*, from whence do flow the continual Currents of *satisfactory Joys, undisturbed Tranquillity, compleat Delights, and constantly increasing Pleasures for evermore.*

A CHRISTIAN PRAYER, to be used by a Family, or single Person, at any Time.

O INFINITE, Eternal, and Almighty God, from whom all created Existences have received their Beginnings; the Heavens and the Earth, and all Things therein, are the Works of thine Hands; thou didst at first create Man in the Image of thyself, the Ever-blessed Trinity, in Righteousness and Holiness, by thy Divine WORD; and influencedst him by thy HOLY SPIRIT, and gavest him that Angelical Life, which was the *Likeness* or *Image* of THYSELF; so that, in Man, a true Offspring of GOD was represented

IN which State, by Obedience, he might have continued without Death, or Separation of Soul and Body; but, as every reasonable created Being must necessarily owe a Tribute of Obedience to his *Supreme Creator*, therefore upon his Obedience must depend his Continuance in his original Purity. But, as thou hadst given him a Command to be fruitful, and to multiply his Species, his Posterity would receive the Effects of his Obedience or Disobedience: And, as thou foresawest his Disobedience to thy Divine Command, thou intendedst for him and his Posterity a Mediator of a better Covenant; so that, though Death was the Consequence of his Transgression, and all his Posterity became mortal upon it, yet, by *this Mediator*, they should obtain a more excellent Ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better Covenant, which was established upon better Promises*.

THEREFORE it is that we presume to approach the Throne of Grace and Mercy, and to make our Petitions to thee, since we are not only encouraged, but commanded by thee to do it, as our bounden Duty.

WE confess, that we find in ourselves an utter Inability to

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perform that Duty, we owe to thee, aright, or absolutely to keep ourselves from doing those Things, thou hast commanded us to abstain from: But, as thou hast appointed us a Mediator of a better Covenant, than the first established with our first Parents, to whom we may, and are commanded to apply for Mercy and Forgiveness of our Transgressions; help us, that we may not be wanting to ourselves, not only to make that due Application for Pardon and Forgiveness, but also manfully to maintain that spiritual Warfare against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil; that we at last may obtain that Conquest over them, that, when we come to be stripp'd of this corruptible Body of *Flesh and Blood, which cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven*, we may also leave with it all the Corruptions of the bodily Senses, and be made fit for the spiritual Enjoyment of thee, our most Powerful Creator, and of our Merciful Redeemer, who died not for himself, neither could Death have Dominion over him, because Death was the Wages of Sin; which Death he having paid for us, has purchased our Redemption from it, by his Conquest over it; through his unerring Obedience in the human Nature; and has thereby assured us of our Redemption from Death, and Resurrection from the Grave. Therefore, O Lord, let the Efficacy of his Resurrection raise us to Newness of Life here, that we may at last partake of Life eternal; both in Body and Soul, and be made Heirs of those inconceivable Joys, which Eye has not seen, nor Ear heard, nor Heart of Man conceived; when we shall not only be restored to the Image of the Divine Trinity, but also have the full Fruition thereof, in knowing and enjoying all the communicable Perfections of that Fountain of Happiness, from whence all Pleasures eternally flow: To which End, let now all our ultimate Portion and chief Happiness in thee be fixed, that when all outward Enjoyments cease to affect our present Senses, proper only for the present Union of Soul and Body, then mayest thou be our everlasting Portion; in whose Presence we may find uninterrupted Joys, and unmolested Tranquillity; which we humbly beg, through the Merits and Mediation of our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who, in Compassion to our Inability to know what rightly to ask, has taught us, when we pray, to say:

OUR Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name; thy Kingdom come; thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven; give us this Day our daily Bread; and forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil: For thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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